

AN INTERVIEW WITH MORTON SAIGER

Interviewee: Morton Saiger

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Description

Morton "Mort" Saiger was born in 1903 and raised in a Jewish ghetto in Poland. He fled the country at the close of 1920 to avoid military service, and came to the United States. Other family members had preceded him several years before, and he joined them in Denver, Colorado. By 1924, young Mort was in Los Angeles, drawn by the growing film and entertainment industry. During the following eighteen years he acted, danced and sang in the Los Angeles area; he even toured the country as a rider with Victor McLaughlin's Light Horse Troop. His life was exciting, but it lacked stability. In 1942, R. E. Griffith offered him a position with the nascent Last Frontier Hotel organization in Las Vegas, and he accepted. Saiger has lived in that city ever since.

Mort Saiger is one in a dwindling group of people who were present at the beginning of the Las Vegas Strip. When the Last Frontier was constructed in 1942 it was located in a sandy wasteland on a gravel road leading west from the then small town of Las Vegas. As the years passed many more hotels and casinos were built around the Last Frontier. Today the site is enclosed within the bright lights, the hustle and the towering buildings of the Strip. Mr. Saiger has been a participant in the development of the gaming industry on the Strip, and he has witnessed the transition in its character from a quiet family resort area to a booming center of entertainment and gambling.

In this oral history, Saiger discusses his years with the Last Frontier, the Desert Inn and the Frontier Hotel, where he has been employed as a host since 1973. He gives the reader valuable descriptions of R. E. Griffith and William Moore, who built the Last Frontier and who were pioneers on the Strip. The layout and operation of hotel-casinos differed radically in the 1940s from the form they assumed by the mid-1950s, and Mr. Saiger discusses the reasons underlying their evolution. Additional topics include encounters with Howard Hughes, observations on the relationship between state politicians and the gambling industry of the 1940s, and some insight into the cultural aspirations of Las Vegas.

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An Oral History Conducted by R. T. King
February 18, 1985

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

ORIGINAL PREFACE

The University of Nevada Oral History Program (OHP) engages in systematic interviewing of persons who can provide firsthand descriptions of events, people and places that give history its substance. The products of this research are the tapes of the interviews and their transcriptions.

In themselves, oral history interviews are not history. However, they often contain valuable primary source material, as useful in the process of historiographical synthesization as the written sources to which historians have customarily turned. Verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the OHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made, but it cannot attest that they are free of error. Accordingly, oral histories should be read with the same prudence that the reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries and other sources of historical information.

It is the policy of the OHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim

as possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable. When human speech is captured in print the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on incoherency. The type font contains no symbols for the physical gestures and the diverse vocal modulations that are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that totally verbatim transcripts are often totally unreadable and therefore a total waste of the resources expended in their production. While keeping alterations to a minimum the OHP will, in preparing a text:

- a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled;

- b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form,

- c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context; and

- d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered

but have been added to render the text intelligible.

There will be readers who prefer to take their oral history straight, without even the minimal editing that occurred in the production of this text; they are directed to the tape recording.

Copies of all or part of this work and the tape recording from which it is derived are available from:

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INTRODUCTION

When Morton (Mort) Saiger arrived in Las Vegas in 1942 he was ready to settle down. Raised in a Jewish ghetto in Poland, Mr. Saiger fled that country at the close of 1920 to avoid military service. Part of his family had preceded him to the United States several years before, and he joined them in Denver, Colorado. By 1924, young Mort was in Los Angeles, drawn by the growing film and entertainment industry. In the following 18 years he acted, danced and sang in the Los Angeles area; he even toured the country as a rider with Victor McLaughlin's Light Horse Troop. His life was exciting, but it lacked stability. In 1942, R. E. Griffith offered him a position with the nascent Last Frontier Hotel organization in Las Vegas, and Mr. Saiger accepted. He has lived in that city ever since.

Mort Saiger is one of a dwindling group of people who were present at the beginning of the Las Vegas Strip. When the Last Frontier was constructed in 1942 it was located in a sandy wasteland on a gravel road leading west from the then small town of Las Vegas. As the years passed many more hotels and casinos

were built around the Last Frontier. Today the site is enclosed within the bright lights, the hustle and the towering buildings of the Strip. Mr. Saiger has been a participant in the development of the gambling industry on the Strip, and he has witnessed the transition in its character from a quiet family resort area to a booming center of entertainment and gambling.

Mort Saiger married Reba Gordon in 1945. The couple has 2 children, Gordon and Deborah, and 2 grandchildren. Mr. Saiger served as president of the Las Vegas Opera Company in the late 1950s. Three times he was elected first vice-president of Temple Beth Shalom. Since 1973 Mr. Saiger has been a host at the Frontier Hotel.

In this 1985 interview Mort Saiger discusses his years with the Last Frontier, the Desert Inn and the Frontier Hotel. He gives the reader valuable descriptions of R. E. Griffith and William Moore, who built the Last Frontier and who were pioneers on the Strip. The layout and operation of hotel-casinos differed radically in the 1940s from

the form they assumed by the mid-1950s, and Mr. Saiger discusses the reasons underlying their evolution. Additional topics that are of interest include encounters with Howard Hughes, observations on the relationship between state politicians and the gambling industry of the 1940s, and some insight into the cultural aspirations of Las Vegas. In giving this interview Mr. Saiger was candid, thoughtful and cooperative. The result is a useful contribution to a growing body of information about the early years of casino gambling in Las Vegas.



MORTON SAIGER
1985

AN INTERVIEW WITH MORTON SAIGER

R. T. King: I'd like to begin the interview by having you tell me some things about yourself. When and where were you born?

Morton Saiger: I was born in a small town east of Warsaw, Poland, known as Opatow. I was born 22 July 1903. I lived there just in misery, let's put it that way. There wasn't much to do, times were bad, World War I was approaching. At that time I had 3 sisters and 2 brothers. We were 3 and 3.

There was a man that had a brewery established in our town. He fell in love with my oldest sister and wanted to marry her, for which in the olden days the deal was made. But World War I approached, and he was eligible for the service. He says no, he's not going to serve. The treatment that we Jews were getting in Poland, we didn't feel that we wanted to serve the Czar. He had brothers in Detroit, so he skipped the border into Austria to Krakow, as a matter of fact. [Although Krakow is now in Poland, in 1912 it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.] And in Krakow he waited until my father brought

my sister over there, and they were married in Krakow.

While they were waiting in Krakow for their papers from the brother and the passage to go to Detroit, my father, who is since deceased, came back [home]. That was in 1912. At that time, my mother created a living hell for my father. She says, "Our first born. How can you allow her to go to America that we don't know anything about with a man she has met here for 6 months living here in our community?" She just made a living hell for him. So he fortunately had a brother in Chicago and one in Toronto that had escaped the 1905 Russian-Japanese war. He wrote them a letter, and they immediately sent for him. So my father went off to America. But they did not settle in Detroit; they settled in Montreal, Canada.

Your father took the family or just left them all?

No, just he himself. It would have been impossible for all of us to go at that time. My uncle wasn't rich enough to send for all of us, and we didn't have the money to travel.

When my father worked, he sent us a letter, he wrote to us. He was working for Fisher Body painting carriage wheels. At that time he was making \$6 a week. That was in 1912. [He was] hoping from that to accumulate enough money to send for the rest of the family. Unfortunately, in 1914 World War I broke out, and [we were] shut off completely. We heard nothing of him, and he heard nothing of us. All they did in the United States and Canada is read what transpires in Poland. He did not know whether we were still alive, and we did not know anything. But came 1918, the Armistice, we begin to hear from him. And immediately he send passage for all of us to come to America. He had then already settled in Denver, Colorado.

Why'd he go to Denver?

Well, because my sister had contracted what they called TB from the cold and the different things. Denver was suggested as the ideal place for her, and they were right. My brother-in-law, my father and my sister came to Denver, and she lived a long time...pretty well. They finally emigrated to Los Angeles in 1924.

Before we start with sending for the family and bringing them to this country, I need to ask a few more questions about your family in Poland. First, can you tell me what your father's name was?

His name was Yitzak, which means Isaac. Isaac Saiger.

What about your mother?

Celia. Celia was the name. And my oldest brother, he was a college boy, so when war broke out he immediately enlisted into the

army, and he became an officer. But we have never heard from him. I have never heard from him. I never saw him since. I remember when he left us. He just passed away. We have his daughter and granddaughter now in Los Angeles living. We saved them. My middle brother was hiding out from military service; he didn't want to go. He was not a college graduate; he didn't want to go. So he was just hiding out from cellar to cellar until they never could catch up with him.

What was your father's profession in Poland?

He had no profession. He dealt with iron works. He dealt with the used parts of McCormick [International Harvester Co.] from Chicago. If a certain part was missing he was the one that procured them for the farmers. He made a living at it.

He was an agent for McCormick?

No, not an agent, but he bought all the old machinery that was disregarded. He saved the parts and restored them, and if somebody needed a part, why, he had it.

In an economic sense, would you say that your family was middle-class in Poland?

No. Very, very poor class. Very poor class.

I would imagine that you were all at least literate and educated and so forth.

Well, we did the best we could. We were educated in the Jewish religion, but as far as academically, my brother's the only one that managed to get it. It was pretty difficult for a Jew to go to school. I mean, it was pretty tough.

Anyway, my middle brother, he hid out. But I was beginning to get of age where.. you

know, when you get in the age of 18 and if you are physically fit, you are eligible for the army. Well, in 1921, I would have been 18 years old. And God knows I was physically fit, but I wasn't going to go to the army.

So your dad sent for the whole family then in 1918, did he?

My dad sent for the whole family, but my mother wouldn't leave because she couldn't get my middle brother out. She wouldn't leave. She said she had one son in Russia she doesn't know anything about; she's not about to leave another one and not knowing anything about. Well, I said, "Mother, I can't help it. I'm going to go alone. Give me my passage." She gave it to me.

Where'd she get the money? Who was supporting the family in your father's absence?

I worked. I worked in a stable, and I have pictures to prove we procured horses for the army. If the Russians were in our town, we bought horses for them. If the Austrians, the Germans came in, we bought horses for them. We'd procure them. And I worked in the stable just showing the horses day and night. And through that I supported my mother and my 2 younger sisters. I, of course, lived in with the people that I worked for.

Did your mother take work into the house at that time?

No. No, there was no such thing as work. It wasn't like America; you can go to work. No. You either lived on charity, which was very little of it, or you did the best you could.

Was your father sending money back to Poland?

Yes. Yes.

That would help.

And that was very periodically. He wasn't a wealthy man, but if we got a \$2 bill in a letter that was 4 ruble. And 4 ruble was my mother's existing for a week...2 weeks, at that time. But many were the nights that my 2 sisters and mother cried themselves to sleep for lack of a piece of bread. Now, I'm telling the truth. That's how things were.

I said, "I've got to go." So my passport was prepared. I said, "Mother, I have to check out."

Now, 28 December 1920 I had everything ready; my passport was smuggled out to Germany to friends of mine in Berlin. I couldn't be caught with it because if I did, they knew that I was escaping. So 28 December—it was a very cold, rainy Friday night—I went down to the railroad station. I spoke Polish fluently. I asked around which one of the freights are going to Torun. I wanted to find out if there was a freight going there. Well, the people told me this freight will be leaving. I could not be seen. I couldn't hop a freight, so I wedged myself in between 2 boxcars. I secured myself good because I feared I [would] fall asleep during the night, and that train wouldn't reach Torun until in the morning. That's already the German line; that's the border. I was afraid if I fall asleep, I'll fall off. So I secured myself pretty well.

About 6:00 in the morning, it's dark; I'm wet, wringing wet. I'm black from the soot. Cold. Shivering. I don't know.. I can't feel myself. I feel a bayonet sticking in my hind end, poking me.

"Was ist sein Namen?" in German. ("What is your name?")

I said, "Thank God, I'm hearing German already! I'm out of Poland."

"Wo in gehst du?" ("Where are you going?")

I asked him, "Will you please help me out?" So they took me.. I couldn't stand up. I said, "I'm escaping because the first of the month I have to go in and register as a soldier. Now, if I'll be there, you'll have one more soldier to fight. I'm going into America where my father is."

Oh, they laughed! They took me into the station, and in that station there were Red Cross women, Jewish organizations. I immediately made myself known. I was wet. Dirty. Those women took me to a place, gave me new clothes. Took a bath. Cleaned up. And I was on my way to Berlin the next day.

I got into Berlin 1 January; I was in Berlin. I looked up the people that had my passport, and they gave it to me. I kissed that passport! I said, "Thank God!" From Berlin I went to Aachen and then to Antwerp, Belgium. In Antwerp, Belgium, I waited a few days, then they send me to Liverpool, England. And in Liverpool, I took the ship to America. I came into St. John's, Canada, the following Friday. We were 6 days on the boat. St. John's, Canada, then to Montreal, Toronto, Detroit, Chicago. I stopped in Chicago to say hello to my uncle and thank him very much. From there, to Denver.

I came to Denver on a Saturday morning, 21 January 1921. There's something that as long as I live I won't forget because the same morning, Saturday morning 21 January, in Akron, Ohio, a girl was born whom I later happened to meet in Las Vegas that became my wife. I came to Denver because my father had a grocery store in Denver. My father, brother-in-law, sister, and 2 beautiful nieces [were there]. Well, my brother-in-law, my father and my sister and one of the nieces...they are gone. I was in Denver until 1924.

Were you working in the grocery store?

I worked in the grocery store. But I wasn't satisfied. I was restless. I was somewhat of a good dancer; I used to go to dances. I neglected going to school, but I didn't neglect going to dances.

At Illich's* Garden I was dancing a contest, and I happened to win that contest. At that time, a very beautiful couple was appearing at Illich's Garden Playhouse: Fredric March and his wife, Florence Eldridge. They presented me with the trophy. I told him I want to go to Hollywood. He said, "You're a handsome boy. Here, I'll give you a letter of recommendation to a gentleman by the name of Paul Koner*."

Paul Koner was the chief casting director for Universal Studios. I believe he's now a talent agent. He's still alive, thank God. He's a very fine man.

I told my father and my brother-in-law and sister I want to go. As a matter of fact, they had already left for California, in Los Angeles. I came to Los Angeles. Every morning I went out to Universal Studios. They paid me \$80 a week, whether I worked or not, but they loaned me out to different pictures. I worked with Pola Negri at Paramount—Okovitsky* directing Pola Negri. Then they loaned me out to Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer. I worked on a picture with Lillian Gish, with tars Hansen. I worked at many of them.

These were acting roles that you had?

Yes. Extra. Dancing, fighting. I was pretty good at it, and chiefly in Universal with the western pictures. I was a good horseman.

But Central Casting Office was established in 1926. They took up an entire seventh floor at the Guarantee Building they built on Hollywood Boulevard. Now, Central Casting Office came in and sold a bill of goods to all the studios who had people in stock, like me and many other men and women. "What

do you need to pay people salaries like that and work and sell them? We will supply your street scenes, evening dress or dinner dress, from \$3 to \$15 a day when you need them.” Now, we were forced to go to Central Casting Office, turn in our 3 picturestraight-faced, 2 profiles—left and right—and write on the back our qualifications, and they filed that. Now, if a request from any studio came in for the following day that they need a number of people for whatever, they went through the files, and we had to call in every 4:00 in the afternoon to see if there’s anything doing for [us].

I went through 3 months without getting a day’s work. I says, “God, that’s not for me.” I went out and got myself a job, and I have never looked back. I worked in delicatessens as a clerk, and I finally landed a job in 1931 with Knudsen Creamery Company. One of the finest. “The very best.” That was their label.

[I was] driving a truck at the price of \$120 a month guaranteed. I used to get up at 4:00 in the morning, get a truckload of goods and go out to a designated territory, like Long Beach, until 5:00, 6:00, 7:00 in the evening...I was still figuring out my load for the next day. We worked on a percentage basis so much per from every item we sold. That came out more than \$120 a month, but you could not make less than \$120. And you had to pray for somebody to get killed before you got a job there.

Between times....I was a pretty good soprano boy in Europe with cantors in synagogue. According to my mother, she was the proudest woman sitting in the synagogue hearing me as a soloist. But in later years, my voice changed. But I still loved to sing. So I started taking lessons; my voice has changed to a lyric baritone.

While driving my truck, my territory was in town—I worked like the Ambassador,

around that vicinity. I was serving the Ralph’s Market on Sixth I think it is. And while I go into the market to write out my order to see what to bring in, while I’m in the truck, I sing at the top of my voice. I used to buy operatic recordings, and I love opera. I’m a bug for opera. I used to try to imitate such as Lawrence Tibbett and Leonard Warren. I tried to hit like “Di Provenze il Mar” from *La Traviata* and like the prologue to *Pagliacci*. All of these beautiful arias, and I tried to sing them.

A gentleman by the name of Tec Bachenheimer* always used to come into that neighborhood about the same time to do some shopping. One day he heard me, and he just listened. The next day he came back, and the third day he came back. Then he couldn’t take it any longer; he introduced himself to me. He told me he was Teo Bachenheimer from Vienna. He is the accompanist and director for one of the prima donnas of the Vienna opera. She brought him here in 1930 from Germany.

Mr. Bachenheimer introduced himself to me, and he asked me to come to his studio. He’d like to give me a try-out. Well, I told him that I couldn’t afford him, working on the truck and only making \$120 a month. And he says, “Why don’t you come over, anyway?” I did, that evening. He tried me on the piano—different scales—and he wanted to know how low I can go and how high and I, as a baritone, hitting A’s constantly and clear, beautiful pitch. And he says, “I’d like to teach you. I’d like to coach you.” He says, “It will be absolutely no charge. I want to make something of you. You’ll be my protégé.” We shook hands, and that was it.

Between time, I had the pleasure of working with a man who is now at the Metropolitan...one of the finest lyric basses. Joe Bernstein was his name, and he is known

as George London. You might have heard of him. He has recorded in Russia Boris Godunov, one of the finest recordings. He autographed one to me. We worked together. I also worked with Brian Sullivan, who used to be Joe Sullivan. We all studied together. In 1939, Mr. Bachenheimer gave a little opera at the Ebell Theater in Los Angeles in Mozart works...Bastien and Bastienne...a young girl and a young fellow, shepherd and shepherdess. I was the magician; Kolatz was my name. I performed very well in it. Then we tried to reach for bigger things. We gave Countess Moritza. Then we were in rehearsal for Don Giovanni, and I had a very, very good part in it. But unfortunately Mr. Bachenheimer had a heart attack, and we had to postpone. When he came back, the second heart attack killed him. That put an end to my studying of voice. Of course, I was not prepared; let's say, I don't think that I would have made it, but that is not here nor there. But that was the end of my singing career.

While in Los Angeles I rode with Victor McLaughlin in [his] Light Horse Troop.

All of that. I did pretty good as a horseman. [I have] a picture. We were performing in St. Louis, in San Francisco, in Nebraska, in Portland. We were just like the Canadian Mounties. We were to go to New York in 1942, but the war broke out and that dismantled us all.

*So is that what led you to come to Las Vegas?
How did you wind up out here?*

To Las Vegas was a different story. I was taking vacation in May of 1942. My favorite place was between Beaumont and up in the mountains, 12 miles from Palm Springs... in the San Gregoria Mountains. I used to go up there. Forgot the name of the place. Anyway, I was up there in May, and it was raining. I said to myself, "I'm only 12

miles from Palm Springs." My friend Irvin Schumann had the Chi Chi bar in Palm Springs; he's a good friend of mine. I says, "I'll take a drive down there."

I drove down there, and he saw me and he says, "Hey, Mort, how're you doing?" All of this. He knew what I was doing— driving a truck. He says, "Come on. Have dinner with me." He says, "How long are you going to be driving that truck?"

You were still driving for the dairy?

I was still driving for Knudsen. I says, "Well, what else can I do? What've you got to offer?"

He says, "I'm building a place in Las Vegas. Now, you know the food business. You know the meat business. You know the dairy business. You know everything, Why don't you come and be my steward?"

I says, "Well, I don't know." I'm still a single fellow; I have nothing to lose.

He says, "Better yet, in the morning, let's drive out to Las Vegas."

Well, we started out in his car. We started out from Palm Springs around 10:00. We got here around 6:00, 7:00 in the evening. We checked in at the El Rancho. When I got into the El Rancho, this was the first time in my life that I was in a gambling place. Never before. I saw all that money.. .all of that liveliness. All of this! I says, "My God! This is for me!"

The next day we drove down to Fremont and Charleston, where he was building the Colony Club. That was in May, but it wasn't supposed to be open until 1 July, the scheduled one. He showed me the place; it's coming up and all of this, but it was unfortunately on the wrong side of the place. He knew nothing about gambling. He had a man that knew much about the gambling; too much for himself.

Who was that?

The man is deceased now. So, he was running the gambling and I was supposed to be the steward, and we had a chef by the name of Colonotti*. I'll never forget him. A beautiful Italian man.

People came. At that time, R. E. Griffith was building the Last Frontier. Every night he used to come down there to play 21, and I used to take him back to the El Rancho in my little Ford. I met Nick the Greek down there. I served him pretty well. He drank nothing but Ovaltine. That is correct. Smoke his cigar and drink Ovaltine. He never took a drink of hard liquor. Got acquainted with Nick Dandolos; I think that was his name. A beautiful, beautiful man. 21 mean that.

Mr. Griffith says to me, after I drove him home several times, "Young fellow, I don't see no future in this place here."

In the Colony?

In the Colony. "You know, I'm building the place on Highway 91, which will be known as the Last Frontier. If something should happen to this, I'd like you to come to work for me." He took a liking to me. I was around catering to the people. I love people, and he noticed that. He figured that that is for him.

Why did he think the Colony wasn't going to work?

Because it was on the wrong side of the highway.

That's the only reason?

That's the only reason. He didn't think that that was supposed to be the place. He figured Highway 91 has more traffic coming and

going from Los Angeles, and the El Rancho is already established. Mr. Griffith was a pretty good man. He realized that; he foresaw things.

He was from Dallas, wasn't he?

He was from Dallas. He was a theater man. He originally came here to open a theater, but there were 2 theaters [here]. Ernie Cragin owned one, and another fellow owned one by the name of Arthur Brick. We used to play gin rummy. He also had an interest in the Nugget at that time with Guy McAfee.

Do you know how Mr. Griffith acquired this land here?

No, but I'd like to know.

This entire land here was purchased by Mr. Griffith from Guy McAfee. Guy McAfee had this land. He had a bootlegging joint on here; he had everything on here. But Mr. Griffith purchase this. He gave him a cashier's check for \$35,000.

And this encompasses how many acres of land?

Thirty-five some-odd acres. All of this from Spring Mountain Road to the Stardust Road. All the way back to the railroad track.

Boy! That's a large piece of property!

Yes, of course.

Now, you say he had a bootlegging operation? And what else?

He had everything on it.

Prostitution?

Maybe. I don't know. I wasn't here at that time. But anyway, Mr. Guy McAfee was a

very fine man. He was an ex-Los Angeles vice squad captain. He came here. Mr. McAfee, for a solid month, walked around showing everybody a cashier's check for \$35,000. He caught a Texas sucker; he sold him that piece of land. You can't buy a foot out here for that price now.

I want you to describe why he may have thought that he had a sucker; why some other people may have thought that they had one.

Well, the fact is that he must have obtained that land for nothing.

I've seen photographs of that, and I can understand why he would have obtained it for nothing.

Yes. Now he got \$35,000!

Can you describe the relationship of that piece of property to metropolitan Las Vegas, such as it was at the time? In 1942, how far out of town would it have been?

In 1942 it seems like 10 miles. But now it's only about a mile and a half. Now it is in the metropolitan [area]. Back then, it seemed like 10 miles because when you came to the Sahara Highway—it was changed from San Francisco to Sahara— at that point on the corner, where there was a market which is no longer a market, there was the city scale where trucks stopped to weigh. Now, at that end was no longer pavement. It was paved only until there. From the rest on down, all the way to Los Angeles, was a gravel road. So that's why it was out of town.

It's out on a gravel road, and I guess it was all sagebrush and desert, too, wasn't it?

That's right. From both sides. I used to take people on horseback rides across the desert all the way to the Bar W ranch where is now the university basketball stadium.

Now, there's another thing there. There were 85 acres of land there, that encompasses now the university and the basketball and all of that, owned by Murray Waldman. He owned also the Waldman Hotel downtown, on Third and Fremont. He and his wife. And they had one daughter, Corky, a beautiful girl. Murray Waldman was an ex-purchasing agent for the Alexandria Hotel in Los Angeles. I knew him then, and I worked for his brother in the imported delicacies. Murray Waldman came out here in the late 1920s, and he acquired land. He was in partner with Nate Mack.

That piece of land was 85 acres, 8 bungalows, a swimming pool, a corral for horses. When [we went] out there, we took a buckboard out with baked beans, hot dogs and everything else. When ladies came out here for a divorce, we didn't cater so much to them that they must sit and gamble. We wanted to entertain them. We took them out horseback riding, to enjoy their afternoon.. whatever they want while they were waiting for their 6 weeks period to obtain a divorce. And at night, they can do anything they want, but in the daytime we tried to keep them busy. I took those people out horseback riding out there.

At one time, I was sitting with Roy Rogers out on the porch of the Last Frontier, and he said, "Mort, I'd like to buy a piece of land here.

I said, "Roy, there's a beautiful piece of land available. I think it's about 85 acres. It has a corral, stables, just what you need. It has 8 bungalows, a swimming pool, lot of shrubs."

He said, "Where is it?" I took him out there. He says, "How much do they want for it?"

“Eighty-five thousand.” Now, he had a lawyer by the name of Philo Harvey*. I’ll never forget that name because Roy and I speak of him now. Philo says to Roy, “What do you want to put out eighty-five thousand for?” He talked him out of it. Unfortunately, Roy has been sorry ever since.

Now along came a retired shoe manufacturer from Massachusetts by the name of Gunderson with a most beautiful blonde wife—a little bit younger than he. But he went western crazy, right now. He went down to Rex Bell, bought himself a big 10-gallon hat, boots, Levis, everything. He’s a western man. Now he buys that piece of land out there for eighty-five thousand. However, unfortunately, he didn’t last long. I don’t know who acquired it after him. His wife was here for a while, but I think she was a socialite. She must have gone back to Massachusetts. I never seen or heard of her since. But that’s the story of that piece of land and how land could have been obtained. Which people didn’t know. They didn’t know how valuable it was.

Let’s go back to the Last Frontier and the origins of the Last Frontier.

OK. Griffith says to me, “Mort, I don’t think that this place will last. Well, if it shouldn’t, when we open the hotel, I’d like you to come to work for me.” He was right. The Colony opened 1 July. August, 15 September, it folded.

I had a 1936 V-B. I had one suitcase, couple of suits. I packed it up, put it in the trunk, in the rumble seat, and I’m heading back to Los Angeles. I got in touch with the Knudsen people; they wanted me back. I’m driving down from the El Rancho on Highway 91 to Los Angeles. I see Mr. Griffith walking around on the outside. The roof was not even

on the Last Frontier! I said, “I owe it to this gentleman to stop and say good-bye to him.

I drove in, and he walks around, and he always greeted me, “Hi, young fellow.”

“Mr. Griffith, you were right. It did not last.”

He says, “Where are you going?”

And I says, “I’m going back to Los Angeles. I’ve got my job back at Knudsen Creamery; I’ll go back to work.”

He says, “My offer still stands.”

I says, “This is 15 September. When will you be ready?”

He says, “We have set a date for 29 October.”

My father and mother were still alive, and they were in Los Angeles. I says, “I’ll drive in and see my folks for a while.”

He says, “Why done t you go back to the El Rancho and leave your bag here? Drive in and see your folks. You’re on a salary as of today.

Well, that kind of hit me pretty good. But he says, “Go ahead and see your folks. Come back when you want to.”

I drove in to Los Angeles. I came in that evening. I went to my father. They were all asleep. I got in and went to sleep. In the morning, we sit down; we had breakfast. I told my dad and mother what had happened there. I told them that I met a Texas gentleman and he’s building a hotel, and he already put me on a salary if I want to come back and work. I told them exactly what he told me.

My dad was a beautiful man. He says, “Son, if a Christian gentleman can say something like that to you, turn around, go back. Go back today. Give him everything that’s in you. Make me proud of you. And I know you will.

I came back the following day and went into the El Rancho, checked in, came down

the next morning to work, and I told Mr. Griffith what my father said. He says, "Oh, I know. I can judge character. I know I pick a winner."

Well, I started to work trying to clean up the place for the carpenters. I go every morning at 5:00, go downtown with the station wagon and pick up a bunch of winos on the street between Carson and Fremont that were sitting there on the curb. Pick them up to come down for labor because that was in 1942.

Labor was really hard to come by, wasn't it?

It was very hard to come by. Every evening I told them, "Come back in the morning." Every evening they wanted to get their day's pay. "Oh, I'll be back in the morning. Oh, yes." Every morning I had to pick up a new bunch. They were satisfied; they got their bottle of Muscatel or whatever it was.

Well, we cleaned up. I had to clean the floors, I mean, with the labor, so that the carpet people could lay the carpets. The furniture start coming in. I placed every bit of furniture in every room according to Mr. Griffith's wishes. The dishes, groceries start coming in. I put that all away under lock and key. The kitchen was being prepared. Had to scour all of those utensils—the frying pans and all of that with salt, burning them up. Chef showed me how. I did everything that was to be done.

We opened the 29th, on a Friday night. We brought in an orchestra leader from New York, a fellow by the name of Gus Martell. A very, very fine pianist and conductor.

After the opening of the Last Frontier, what was your title? What did you do?

I did everything! I carried the mail from the Last Frontier down to the post office

downtown at 13th and Stewart. It was done purely for publicity purposes. I don't recall quite vividly enough who the senator or the congressman was who visited with us, and we told him about it. The mailbags on the horses's backs said U.S. Mail. I said, "We're doing it for publicity purposes."

He said, "That don't make any difference. It says they're United States mail. That makes it carrying the mail via pony express, and you're a pony express mail carrier." That's how I became pony express rider.

Now, you were costumed as a pony express rider?

No, sir. I wore my regular blue jeans and a western shirt, hat, boots.. Tony Lama boots that I've been wearing ever since. And that is the way.

About what year would that have been?

That was in 1942. We opened 29 October 1942. There after about October-November—December.. couple of months.

Whose idea was it for you to do that?

At that time we had a publicity director, which my memory fails me; I can't think of him. It was mostly Mr. Bill Moore, who was the architect of the Last Frontier and the nephew to Mr. R. E. Griffith, the owner. He thought of it, chiefly. And we had a photographer at that time—Drew Vincel*. [He was] a very, very fine northern Nevada man. His license plate was No. 1, to tell you the truth. He was very, very known in the northern part of Nevada. He was from here. He was a photographer and sort of publicity [man]. And he shot that picture [of me carrying the mail], which is now famous; it's called Mr. Frontier. It's known

as the last pony express mail carrier, and it is on my stationery and my personal card. My horse and I were always on there. [Laughter] It has become a trademark.

Well, you also were involved in a number of other things that you were called upon to do that may or may not have been part of your job description. I understand that you also carried money to the bank. Is that correct?

Well, it was my duty to take the money from the hotel as well as the casino money to the bank, make the deposits. I carried it in a station wagon and bring all the money back—the change for the casino, the currency, all of the silver for the slots. That was my daily routine work, too. That was the early part, in the morning. In the afternoon, I took guests and whoever wanted to go horseback riding; I ran the stable. We had a fellow by the name of Jack Hoxie, who was a universal Picture star. Mr. Griffith knew him from Texas, and he brought him here to run the stable for him. I was his assistant in the stable. Well, Mr. Hoxie went back to Universal after 2 months to make a picture, and they turned it over to me.

I also had to haul the maids back and forth, in the morning as well as in the afternoon.

Now, in the evening, it was my duty to work the lights on the entertainers. In the Last Frontier, right in the front of the stage was a little cubbyhole on top there with a wheel with 5 holes in it: one was amber; one was blue; one was yellow, I believe; and one was a black-out. That was the wheel I had to work on. Maxine Lewis was the producer of the shows. Maxine Lewis was the sister of Bill Powell. She was a very fine producer, I was her assistant. I saw that the orchestra came on time. After the show, they played music for 15 minutes so people after dinner could dance.

Before working the lights, if we had some black entertainers, I had to pick them up at 6:00 to bring them down to the show. We had' rooming houses in the West Side, which was known as the colored neighborhood at that time. We roomed them over there. Then I had to take them back after midnight, right after the second show, because there was no other transportation over to the West Side. When the weather was nice, it was beautiful. But after a rain, my station wagon used to sink in there because there was no paved roads in the West Side.

We had the entertainers such as the black people—Sammy Davis, Jr., and his father and uncle, the Mastin Trio. Ted Lewis had black assistants. So many of the black...Arthur Lee Simpkins...they all worked here, but they could not stay in the hotel. It was unfortunate, but that was the law; they could not stay in this hotel or in any other. [I remember] Eddy Anderson, Rochester from Jack Benny's fame. I was so hurt that I couldn't see straight because this is the way I was treated in Poland, as a Jew, so I just ached. I'm telling the truth.

The Will Mastin Trio were through about 10:00, and at 12:00 they had to go on again. Instead of going to the West Side, we had in the back of the kitchen on the outside a picnic table. I had to bring out sandwiches for them to eat there. They couldn't even eat in the kitchen. Now, that was criminal. Thank God that the law has changed.

Was that Mr. Griffith's policy?

No! It was a state policy. It was the city policy. No, sir! It was not Mr. Griffith's policy. It was the law. The law of the land at that time. Rotten!

Now, we're talking about the period during the middle to late 1940s?

In the late 1940s, yes.

Was there any policy of segregation of customers?

No. No. No.

Only of employees?

The employees.

This would have been during a time when the United States military was building large bases around Las Vegas, and, of course, federal policy at that time was that there would be no segregation of any kind.

That's right.

I know that it had an effect on communities that surrounded military establishments in the rest of the country. Was there any noticeable change in employee-management relationships in Las Vegas as a consequence of the military being located there?

No, none whatever to my knowledge. But, I'll tell you one thing. We all kept our fingers crossed that we are not called to the service. Help was very difficult to get... that is, good help. We had to settle with whatever we could and do the best with it.

Elizabeth Nelson Patrick talked with Mr. William Moore, before his untimely death, and discussed the shortage of material that was a result of the Second World War. Can you tell me something about that in your own experience?

Well, it was very, very bad. We had to have stamps for meat for the hotel; we had to have stamps for sugar, for coffee—for everything required stamps—as well as tires. You had to have certificates. We had a

fellow by the name of Mr. Brown. He was the administrator. He allocated the stamps for food. We did pretty good, but we had to go into Los Angeles and pick it up ourselves and haul it in. We had plenty of meat, but not to the point where we could be generous with it. We had to ration it out somewhat. If you wanted a steak during the dinner time, you always had to know the chef to get a steak. It was pretty rough all over.

Well, it wasn't uncommon in that period to find ways to circumvent federal policy concerning stamps and so forth. Did the Last Frontier have any way of getting the material and the personnel it needed?

No. The Last Frontier lived up absolutely to the law. Mr. R. E. Griffith was a gentleman that obeyed the law, and so did Mr. Bill Moore. We said, "Let's not get ourselves involved with the government. Let's do the best we can." And they were pretty, pretty accurate. They were very, very loyal. And I'm very proud of it because I kind of look forward to that, too.

How did the military posts surrounding Las Vegas feel about the growth of the gambling industry? Did they have any regulations regarding their men frequenting such establishments?

No, there were no regulations. But to tell you the truth, on Saturday morning and Sunday morning, we had our entire show and the orchestra taken out to what is now Nellis—at that time it was McCarran Field—to the auditorium and entertain the soldiers. We used to do that sometimes Saturday noon and sometimes Sunday noon. We used to entertain. Then if there was a big graduation of bombardiers, navigators and all of those aviators, the top men we used to invite, and we

had a table in the center set for 20. They had dinner and the show free on the Last Frontier.

Did the military have any economic impact on the gaming industry of Las Vegas? Did you find that you had a number of military customers?

Some of the higher ranked officers used to come in. But not much on the gambling. No. No. The war was their main topic. The war was on their mind and their heart. They were pretty loyal; they didn't carouse. That was one thing that I remember vividly. They were pretty loyal people. Thank God for that. That's why we won it.

Let's get back to the Last Frontier itself. When Mr. Griffith made his plans to build the Last Frontier, what exactly was he planning to build? Was he planning to build a hotel or a dude ranch or a divorce ranch, or what? I get the impression he didn't intend to build a casino. What did he have in mind?

[A hotel and] a casino with it. But they didn't know how to build a casino—that [the casino] has to be before you go into the dining room.

Could you describe the Last Frontier casino to me?

Well, it was just ass backwards. The first and foremost and most serious mistake that was made in the hotel was through the architecture. Of course, Bill Moore didn't visualize that the gambling was the main thing. They were catering to a hotel, to the guests. When you came into the lobby, you always had to ask, "Where's the casino?"

From the left side of the lobby is where you walked into the dining room; you had to go across the dining room to go into the

casino. There should have been no door or wall between the lobby and the casino. The dining room should have been built in a different side. When a guest checks in, his eyes should have been focused on the casino. The Desert Inn was built that way. When a guest came in the first thing he saw was the casino. Before he even checked in, he was ready to get to the gambling tables.

In other words, the lobby was beautiful as a hotel was known to be. You walk in from the lobby to the dining room. And he thought that the casino is supposed to have a separate entrance coming from the outside [with] the 21 Club sign on there. It was just not the right way. But of course, Mr. Griffith was not a casino man and he figured that if they want to gamble, they'll go on the outside or go through the dining room. It was very awkward.

Like here. [Indicates a photograph] See it here? This is the Ramona Room. This is the lobby where you walked in. You had to walk all the way through down here to come down to the Gay Nineties [Bar].

I see. Let me tell the tape what we're doing here. We're looking at a photograph of the Last Frontier, that looks to have been taken in the early 1940s. It shows several different entrances to a long building. This, as Mr. Saiger has suggested, is segregated into different components so that the customer is not required to walk through the gambling area to enter the hotel or dining room.

Was the casino layout the only problem or were there others as well?

When the show goes on, and you had to page somebody, the page wasn't shut off—it came through the dining room. And if you came down from your room into the lobby, then you had to go through the dining room

to get over to the casino or to the bars, which was just opposite. That was a very, very fatal mistake. It was not so much a mistake as Mr. Bill Moore was not acclimated to the gambling. He did it as an architect. The guests come in; they come down; they want to go into the coffee shop, which was right at their doorsteps; then they go into the dining room. The gambling was secondary with them where, when you build a hotel, the gambling has to be first. When you come in, before you even reach to the checking-in point, you're looking at the gambling.

Did Mr. Griffith think that he was going to make most of his money off of his hotel business, then, or off of gambling?

Well, the gambling was only a sideline. He didn't know [gambling]. We had a very, very fine gambling man in a fellow by the name of Ballard Baron. He was also from Dallas. At one time, Ballard Baron told me that he and Jakie Freedman, who later purchased the Sands, used to carry a blanket with them and go to an alley after a football game or a baseball game and spread a blanket in the alley and start shooting nickels and dimes and dollars, trying to catch suckers. Mr. Ballard Baron did not pull any punches.

This is back in Dallas, when they would do that?

That was back in Dallas, yes. But, later on, he became a wealthy man.

Mr. Jakie Freedman was a wealthy man. Jakie Freedman used to come down after he purchased the Sands; he had a beautiful secretary that later became Mrs. Moe Dalitz; a beautiful girl. He used to come down with her to the Desert Inn after the Desert Inn opened...bring a lot of money. Stand right at

the crap table, shooting dice. No matter how much chips that paid him off, he would still be betting the cash; he'll never bet back the chips. He was a fabulous man.

Then the Desert Inn people came in. Wilbur Clark was a casino man. He was at the El Rancho for a while. Now, he purchased the land right across from the Frontier.

Right across the road; right across 91?

Where the Desert Inn is now. He was going to build the Desert Inn, but he ran out of funds. The floor was down; the walls weren't up at the Desert Inn. So he went to Cleveland.

Did he already have connections in Cleveland?

I don't know. Somebody made connections for him with Mr. [Morris B.] Moe Dalitz, Mr. [Morris] Kleinman, Mr. [Samuel] Tucker, [Thomas] McGinty, Ruby Kolod and Mr. [Bernard "Lou"] Rothkopf. All of these people. They went down there, and he made a deal with them, and they came and finished the place. Now, while they were building the Desert Inn, they were staying here at the Last Frontier with us. Mr. Ballard Baron knew them very well; he knew these people. Ballard Baron once told Mr. Dalitz and Mr. Kleinman, "Gentlemen, I know when you open up, we'll lose a lot of help. But I want you to do me one favor. Let's have a gentlemen's agreement. Do not, do not move that Jew boy away from me, Mort Saiger. Leave him with us." They gave him their word that they will not touch me.

I was working all of the stable when I met my wife-to-be, and in 1945 we got married like all human beings should. And we got married right here in the Last Frontier Hotel. When I got married, I went to my bosses—Mr. Ballard Baron, who was the casino manager, Mr. Griffith and Bill Moore—and I said,

"Gentlemen, now that I am married I can no longer work on the salary I am making." They said, "Don't worry. We'll make a dealer out of you, and you'll make plenty money." So they taught me to deal 21. So I started making better money.

Did you continue to do the other sorts of things you'd been doing, or did you just drop that entirely?

No, no. That was already turned over to somebody else. I turned a lot of things over to a different fellow.

You have met a number of political figures during your career in gaming in Las Vegas. You mentioned one in particular, Pat McCarran, whom you met in the 1940s, I believe. Is that right?

Well, it was either 1943 or 1944. I came to Reno from the Last Frontier just a couple days before Christmas to spread a little cheer.

Were you up here on business?

No, [just to spread] a little cheer among officialdom— see a few customers, a few higher-ups up here at Reno. Some acquaintances to the Last Frontier. I was to meet Senator McCarran at that time, and we had a breakfast appointment at the Riverside. He ordered breakfast, and somebody interrupted him, and he stood up to shake hands with them. I ordered my breakfast. When the waiter brought in our food, we sit down, he took a look at my plate. He says, "Well, for heaven sake! A nice Jewish boy like you! Ham and eggs?" He was very shocked.

I said, "Senator, that isn't ham. Just a moment." I dipped my napkin in the glass of

water and sprinkled on it, and I says, "Hammy. Hammy. You are now Sammy. Sammy." He laughed that he fell over. He fell off of his chair. That was Senator McCarran.

[Laughter] Had you known him before this incident?

Yes. I had. I had met him at the Last Frontier.

Can you tell me the circumstances surrounding that meeting?

Well, it was just that Mr. Bill Moore at that time was a politician. He was also the man that established the first gambling commission. He was the one. He was a great man. A very fine man. He introduced me to him because I had to go and pick him up, and I chauffeured him around, whenever it was necessary, with his bodyguard and all of that. He was fine. I liked him very much.

Would you say that he was a friend to the gaming industry?

I think he was. I think very much so.

Can you give me an example of what you mean by that?

For example, when Mr. R. E. Griffith was supposed to build the Last Frontier and it was during 1942, material was difficult to get. I think that Senator McCarran had a hand for Mr. Griffith to get some of the material that was difficult to get. I think Pie did.

Do you know how he accomplished it?

No. I don't know the inner workings of it, but I think he had something to say about

it. He was a very friendly man. He was very much in favor of the gambling, I would say. To the best of my knowledge.

Was he seen at the Last Frontier with frequency over the years?

Yes, when he came down to Las Vegas he stayed at the Last Frontier, and he was quite often there.

Were there any other political figures in this state that you were familiar with or associated with during that time?

Well, I was familiar with Senator Alan Bible.

How did you meet him?

I met him also through the Last Frontier.

Through Bill Moore again?

Through Mr. Moore, yes. As a matter of tact, and this was known, he always called me his twin brother. We resembled one another.

You do. I've seen photographs.

Everybody says, "Is this your twin brother?"

"No," he says, "But I like him." Alan Bible was very, very fine. Very jovial man. Very fine man.

I also had the pleasure and good fortune of meeting Governor [Vail N.] Pittman. I was president of the Las Vegas Opera Association in 1956. We brought in an opera from Los Angeles. Produced it at the Las Vegas High School. It only seated 1500 people. The opera was La Boheme. The orchestra leader at that time was Carmen Dragon of the Hollywood

Bowl fame. A very famous concertmeister was Tosha Zeittel*. He was the concertmeister of the orchestra.

Governor Pittman was called on the stage before the opening of the curtain to introduce the dignitaries and say how much work that was put in to produce the opera here. He gave a nice speech and sort of said how wonderful it was that people are trying to bring a little culture to Las Vegas. My objective was only for one purpose: all over Las Vegas was known as Sin City; I wanted that erased. It was not Sin City. I wanted a little culture—mix it in. We have opera. We have beautiful schools. We have churches. We have synagogue. We have every thing here. Why name it Sin City? So Governor Pittman spoke on that. So when he got off, he introduced me: "And now I give you, ladies and gentlemen, I want you to meet the president of the Las Vegas Opera Company, Mr. Mort Saiger." That was the most beautiful, most thrilling introduction by the governor of the state of Nevada to introduce me.

Well, let's go back to Alan Bible for a moment. You told me a little bit about Senator McCarran. Would you say that Senator Bible was sympathetic to gaming in Nevada?

Very much so. Oh, yes, indeed.

What gave you reason to believe that he was?

Well, he was always plugging it. I thought he was plugging it. He was very friendly. He was always visiting the existing establishments, especially the Last Frontier. He came to the chamber of Commerce meetings; he came to the Elks. He was a rounder.

Did he have a personal friendship with either Mr. Griffith or with Mr. Moore?

With Mr. Moore, yes. He [was] very personal due to the fact that they did some work together here in the capital.

Work with the gaming commission?

Yes. They were meeting here often. That gives me to believe, and I frankly and honestly believe, that he was a friend to the industry.

Was he ever able to do anything for the Last Frontier?

Now, I do not know anything of that kind. I was not in the inner circle to know whether he was doing anything towards or against it. I know I have a feeling he was never doing anything against it.

Were either Senator McCarran or Senator Bible gamblers themselves? Did they play the tables or do anything like that?

Oh, no. I never seen them do that. They enjoyed a show and dinner. But as far as gaming is concerned, no. I can't say that I've ever seen either one of them dropping a dime on the tables.

Well, of course, there's considerable interest in both of these senators here in the state, and there hasn't been a great deal written about them. Are there any stories you can tell me about either one that would tend to illustrate their personalities or give us some insight into what kind of men they were?

Well, they were jovial. Especially Alan Bible. He always has a joke to tell you. He was very, very congenial, very pleasant. Senator McCarran sometimes yes and no. But as far as I knew him, I've never had any derogatory dealings with him. "Hello there, Senator." "Hello there, Mort." That's about it.

When they came to the Last Frontier, what were the things that they enjoyed most about their visit?

Well, they were always with Mr. Bill Moore in Mr. Moore's office. That's something that I wouldn't know.

No. You had mentioned before, though, about people being entertained by trips into the desert, by hunting and fishing and things of that nature. I was wondering if either of the senators had interests that the Last Frontier was able...

No, not to my knowledge. Not to my knowledge. I don't remember ever them going out on any of those trips. No. They came chiefly, what business they had to attend to, to attend to the business, have dinner and perhaps see a show, and then get out. I did not see them, what you might call, fraternizing or carousing. No, not to my knowledge. I never saw them do that.

Of course, they're both national political figures. Were there any other state politicians that you can recall who came to visit with Mr. Moore or Mr. Griffith?

Well, Walter Baring used to come quite often. And of course, as far as the governors were concerned, Pittman, Bible, [Charles H.] Russell. I remember them pretty well. [Alan Bible was elected to the United States Senate 4 times, but he was never governor of Nevada.]

I'm getting the impression, from what you've been telling me, that Mr. Moore was in a sense, almost a liaison between the gaming community and the government of the state of Nevada.

You see, Mr. Griffith was not a gambling man; Mr. Moore knew nothing. What we had

at that time was Mr. Ballard Baron who was a gambler. He ran the casino. The time was difficult. Had it been run with the keenness like the Desert Inn, which was run by the people that knew gaming... I know if Bill Moore had been successful a little later, he could have run for governor without any doubt and win. He was a liked man; he was an honest man, a very fine man. That's all I can say about Dill Moore. He was a great loss to the state, to the community and, of course, to his family.

Do you feel he would have had the support of the casinos in Las Vegas?

He would have indeed. He was a straight-forward man. But times were such, circumstances were such. His uncle and their partners were hammering for them to sell the hotel. In other words, Bill Moore was only looking for the community. He built the Silver Slipper—playgrounds for children. He built a racetrack where they should have concentrated on rooms to make a more elaborate hotel. They didn't do that. He went for community-wise, and that's what brought the curtains down from the partners and the associates from Dallas, Texas. They didn't see the profits coming in as they anticipated.

I'd like to talk a little bit about Howard Hughes. You met Mr. Hughes, I believe, for the first time in the 1940s. Can you recall that first meeting?

Yes, indeed. That was a lucky day for me. I had the pleasure and the good fortune of meeting Mr. Howard Hughes in 1944. He was staying at the Last Frontier. As a matter of fact, I was still a bachelor then; I was upstairs and he was downstairs. I had a room up there, too. He worked out on Lake Mead—-he was doing

something with boats or whatever he was doing. We got acquainted. I can tell you one thing: he took a liking to me, and I respected him. I had the good fortune to go out with him on several occasions to dinner to the El Rancho. And I might say that I paid the bill; he never carried any money with him. But the following day, he used to tell me, "Go tell Bill Gay how much you spent, and he'll give you the money back." And so it was.

And I always asked him, "Mr. Hughes, you have so many...."

"Well," he says, "all of these guys...all they want to do is drink."

Oh, you're talking about the tact that he had so many Mormons surrounding him?

That's right. I said, "You have so many fine people that you could...."

He says, "I like to go out with you; I like to talk with you." We had some other things to do, which I consider myself very fortunate that he picked on me. I met a genius; I think he was 25 years before his time and maybe longer than that. We sat and we watched a show or we ate dinner—his mind was always working—take down and put down something—"Go ahead, talk, Mort." It never disturbed him; he always noted something; he had a pencil and paper with him.

Did he show any interest in the gambling industry at that time?

Not too much. He'd go over and bet \$2, bet \$5, and not too much.

He showed no interest in owning his own casino?

No, no, not at that time. At that time he was just concentrating on what he was doing.

And he was building, I believe, quite a few things out on the lake. [When] he came home, he had to take a bath; I mean he was dirty. By that I mean from working with grease and all of that.

What sorts of things did the 2 of you discuss when you went out to dinner?

Oh, different things in general—how things are going and what I thought of what's going to be here. And I told him the future is bright for here. At that time the war was almost over, and while it was still on I says that, "The good Lord will bless us, and we'll win the war, and if it gets over in a hurry, why, I think this will be a very, very beautiful spot." But I didn't have the money to buy any land. I could have bought some, sure, but what are you going to do when you have no money?

Well, when did you see him again after 1944?

Forty-four and 1945.

Oh, he kept returning?

He was staying there. He had a room, a steady room, at the Last Frontier.

For 2 years?

Almost, almost. And then I was married in 1945. Now he asked me to go someplace with him, and I had to stay up all night, but I was working as a 21 dealer—blackjack dealer. I said, "Mr. Hughes, I owe my boss a duty that I'm getting paid for; I've got to give him a good day's work; I can't stay out too late. Besides, I'm married now, and I have a baby on the way.

Now, this is one word I will never forget as long as I live. And maybe that is the reason

I have seen managers come and managers go at the Last Frontier, and I'm the only one that's still there. I just celebrated here the 43rd year in that spot. They just gave me a plaque. He said to me one word: "You come on with me; you do this, and as long as you live you'll never have to worry. You will get your check regardless."

And me, being so struck with it and all of this from a millionaire, a genius—here, an immigrant boy like me, to have him tell me this, I says, "Oh, Mr. Hughes, that isn't necessary."

He says, "I know it isn't necessary. I want to do it." Maybe there is somewhere in the books that Mort Saiger.. .because managers have come and gone.. .they've all been told Mort Saiger stays. I hope it's right because I'm doing my job—I try to.

Yes. Did you ever find out what it was that Mr. Hughes wanted you to do? You said he wanted you to go with him one night.

Oh, yes. He wanted a companion. And he trusted me. He had faith in me. I wasn't talking; I wasn't bragging about it or anything else, but I kept everything to myself; I respected him too much. He was a man to be respected—admired and respected And that's what I did. And he was enough of a man to understand that. Everybody else was out to, see, "What's in it for me?" I was never that way. And perhaps that's what he realized, and that's why he wanted me with him.

From then on I never saw him until I was already at the Desert Inn in the late 1950s. He came in one night, and he heard my name paged. He was sitting at the crap table with a very beautiful starlet, and he asked the pit boss, "Mort Saiger? Is he around? Will you try to get him?" He heard my name, because it was the elapse of about 5, 6 years since haven't

seen him. So he came into the pit, shook hands with me, "How are you, boy? How are you?"

"Fine," I told him. "Fine, Mr. Hughes," and all of that. I haven't seen him since—from that night on I never saw him again.

You told me that it was apparent to you that he was a genius, that he was far ahead of his time. One example that you gave me was that he was continually taking notes. Is there any reason for you to have that opinion of him? What is it that you saw in him in the 1940s that led you to believe that he was that advanced?

Well, I started analyzing him. He inherited, they say, about \$5 million when his father passed away. At that time I understand he was a boy of about 25, 26 years old—a beautiful dresser, a golf player; he was sort of a rounder—drinking and all of that—carousing. After his father passed away he took inventory on everything. He threw golfing, all of that carousing and all of the good clothes away; he put on a pair of overalls and went to work, and from then it's history. So how can you do anything else but admit that he has to be a genius, of what he built.

I was hoping you might have some personal insight into it.

No. I was never with him to that respect.

Well, you would have met Mr. Robert Maheu, then?

Yes, I did.

Can you recall the first meeting you had with him?

When Mr. Hughes bought the Desert Inn, and he occupied that floor upstairs, Mr. Maheu was the chief man. Mr. Maheu came down; he must have known something because he wanted to meet me. He must have known that I had known Mr. Hughes. I met Mr. Maheu, and I must say a perfect, perfect gentleman. He's a gentleman's gentleman. Mr. Maheu, after a few days, took me aside, and he says, "Mort, I know you know the old man." He says, "He is upstairs. He has got at all time a guard up there. Do you know anybody around here that could be a waiter to him on a 24-hour basis? Now, he needs a man that can be available on a 24-hour base."

I said, "Yes, Mr. Maheu. I have the man." That man at that time was our waiter. I was a floorman at the Desert Inn. The floormen had a separate table in the coffee shop where we ate there together; that was the table. And that was the waiter for us. He was an English boy by the name of Margolis—Gordon Margolis*. By the way, he wrote a book about Howard Hughes. Gordon Margolis was the boy. I took Margolis away and aside...I liked him because he was attentive. He came from England; he wanted to get somewhere. And the reason I liked him is because his first name was Gordon; my son's name is Gordon; my wife's maiden name was Gordon. So it kind of struck me.

I took him aside. I says, "Gordon, I have something to tell you. This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance for you. Mr. Howard Hughes needs a man to be on attendance around the clock, 24 hours. I know you are single. I know you're intelligent. I know you're eager to advance. And I'll give you my word—that's not from Mr. Hughes or anybody else. The way I know Mr. Hughes, if you will be honest and attend to him the way he wants you to—don't worry, there's no hanky-panky stuff with Mr. Hughes; he's a straight man and a real man, so you don't have

to worry about anything else—you can bet your bottom dollar that you will be fixed for the rest of your life; you'll never have to worry.

His eyes popped open; he says, "Get me to him."

I got a hold of Mr. Maheu. I says, "Mr. Maheu, this is the man." He interviewed him. For about an hour he was sitting with him in the office. He came out. He thanked me, and Mr. Maheu shook my hand. He says, "You know your people." The rest is history. He was with him all the time—went with him all the way until they got him out of here.

You've mentioned the Desert Inn several times, and that it was built across the highway from the Last Frontier. When was the Desert Inn built, and what effect did its opening have on the Last Frontier?

The Desert Inn opened [in 1950]. They were gambling people. They attracted a different type of clientele. The Last Frontier started hurting. Soon enough, it was sold.

When you say that they attracted a different type of clientele at the Desert Inn, exactly what do you mean by that? What kind of clientele was the Last Frontier attracting?

Well, the Last Frontier catered to a lot of people, but not exactly. The gambling wasn't like the eastern people were used to. The people from Cleveland, the owners of the Desert Inn, attracted people from all over. It was a different type of gambling.

What do you mean by a different type of gambling?

By that I mean it was on a larger scale. It was no such thing as \$100 maximum. It was

gambling. If you want to bet 200, 300, 400, or 500, you were covered.

And the Last Frontier was small-scale gambling?

Much smaller.

What was the reason for that?

Well, the reason for it was that Mr. Griffith was a theater man, not a gambling man. Mr. Ballard Baron, he was a gambler, but he didn't have everything to say about it. They were partners in the deal. But the people in the Desert Inn, they opened the gambling place for a purpose of gambling. But it was a different operation. You came into the lobby, you fell right into the casino. As a matter of fact, you had to look for the registration desk, where at the Last Frontier you came in and you had to look for the casino. So you understand the way it goes?

Had Mr. Griffith and Mr. Moore and Mr. Baron ever discussed changes that might have to be made in order to remain open, to remain profitable? Were they determined to sell, or did they feel they couldn't compete? Apparently, they could see that they weren't doing things the way they had to in order to make it profitable. Did they ever think of adjusting their method of management?

Well, the final blow came, I believe, in my opinion, when the Desert Inn opened in 1950. They did the bulk of the business at that time on the Strip, which consisted of only the El Rancho, the Thunderbird, the Last Frontier and the Flamingo. That's all there was at that time. The bulk of the business was done by the Desert Inn. The Desert Inn happened to have been right across the street.

Now, I came up with an idea, and it was absolutely ready to go into production. I said to the people across the street and to Mr. Baron and to Mr. Moore that with the business between across the Street and here we should build a tunnel—a walking tunnel—from one to another because the people will go into a car and go elsewhere. [Then] we have lost them. But with the people that the Desert Inn is bringing in, if they will be walking back and forth, we will have them here in this neighborhood. That tunnel was supposed to be built right underneath, from the porch of the Last Frontier to the porch of the Desert Inn.

Would that have been done during construction or after?

That would have been done right around in 1951 to 1952 before the Last Frontier was sold and when the Desert Inn was going full blast.

How was your idea received?

The idea was received pretty good by Bill Moore, as well as by the officials of the Desert Inn. However, there was one from Dallas, one of the main partners in the Last Frontier, one of Mr. Griffith's associates, he says, "No, we have invested enough money here." They were ready to sell, and they had made up their mind to dispose of the hotel. That's how the idea died.

Who owned the land that was across the highway that the Desert Inn was located on?

[That was owned by] a fellow by the name of Art Brick, who owned the Palace Theater downtown. He was also a big shareholder of the Golden Nugget with Mr. Art Ham and

Guy McAfee. They were the partner Art Ham, Guy McAfee, Art Brick and a couple of others, who owned the Golden Nugget.

What can you tell me outside of what you've already given me about Mr. McAfee as a person and his business dealings? What motivated him and so forth?

I remember him in Los Angeles; he was a vice squad captain in Los Angeles. Well, he made pretty good down there and quit and came out to Las Vegas when the gaming became legal in the 1930s before the Boulder Dam was being built. You didn't need much money then to open up a store downtown and start running gambling. He was a pretty wise, shrewd man in the gambling industry because he was the vice captain in the Los Angeles County. So he knew all of the gamblers and knew all of the rounders, and that's how he got started. And he kept on buying property with it. He lived at the El Rancho—I remember that. He was a loner, and then he married somebody...I remember that, too. But he was a pretty good fellow.

How did he get along with the management at the Last Frontier?

Oh, fine, fine.

They forgave him for thinking of them as suckers?

[Laughter] Oh, they had a laugh; they had a laugh on him. Yes, but he was all right; he probably got the piece of property for something less than nothing.

So then he developed an association with Jake Kozloff, is that correct?

That's right.

Where was Mr. Kozloff from?

Mr. Kozloff, who is deceased now, was a brewery man from Pittsburgh. He, too, did not know much about gambling, but he got acclimated with Guy McAfee. He worked with him there for a little while, and he organized a group. He was the head of it. They bought the Last Frontier in 1952. Later on, it took about 4 or 5 years, some other group came in, and they decided to tear it down and build a modern one—the New Frontier, they called it.

Had business declined to the point where the Last Frontier was no longer profitable by that time?

Well, I didn't carry the books, and I didn't know that. But, evidently, they were not happy or satisfied with it. Instead of building more rooms that they needed after the war, they build a racetrack in the back attracting motorcycle racers and all of that sort of stuff. The Desert Inn built rooms. The demand was for more rooms. That had something to do with it. And when Mr. Kozloff came in, he said something to me I didn't like and he didn't like, and we parted company.

You don't care to tell me what that was?

I didn't like one thing. When I was dealing to a group of people, I did not appreciate him coming in with his cigar in his mouth and take the deck out of my hands and start dealing and hurt somebody—there. That wasn't business-like. That was not the kind of a business that I want to be affiliated with. I told him I didn't like it. He use a few words, and I use a few words and I got out. I no sooner got home,

told my wife what happened, I get a call from one of the finest men that ever was—Ruby Kolod. He was the man at the Desert Inn. Casino man.

“Mort, I heard something happened. There is no longer a gentlemen's agreement. What're you doing?”

I says, “I'm going to have dinner with my wife.”

He says, “Don't. Come on down and have dinner with me and bring your wife down.”

I did. He says, “I'd like you to come to work for us.”

I says, “Ruby, I want to go in and see my folks in Los Angeles.”

He says, “Go ahead. But you are on a payroll as of tomorrow,” he says. “Come back when you want to, but don't make it too long.”

Well, [my] wife and I drove in; we saw my folks. Two days later I came back. I reported. Started dealing 21. Moe Dalitz says to me, “I want you to deal 21 here and the first opening that comes, you're going to go on the floor.”

Between time the Stardust was being completed; a fellow by the name Tony Cornero was building it. Unfortunately, something happened to him; he dropped dead. The Desert Inn people took it over. Mr. Dalitz asked me and several others to break in dealers—teach them. I says, “I'll go, if you want me. I'll go over to the Stardust.”

He says, “No; you going to stay here, and you're going to get your chance here at the Desert Inn. You're too well known at the Desert Inn.” So about 2 years later they made a floorman out of me at the Desert Inn. I stayed there for 15 years.

I handled all of the tournament of champions money...the silver dollars. I displayed all the silver dollars, the payoff, the 10,000. Out of 150,000 silver dollars that I handled, one silver dollar was lost, and this is the one, you see here? [Mr. Saiger offers a

silver dollar for inspection.] And the reason for it is this is 1921—the year that I came to this blessed country of America and my wife’s year of birth. That’s why it’s been with me since. Out of 150,000, only one of them was lost, and it isn’t lost; it’s with me. It’s going to stay with me. [Laughter]

Now, in 1969 I was doing very well at the Desert Inn. Mr. Maheu, who was a big man for Summa....

He was Howard Hughes’s right-hand man, wasn’t he?

That’s right. He called me into the office, and he says, “Mort, we have purchased the Landmark, and we are making Frenchie Ravatol* the casino manager, and I’d like you, very much, to go over there and help him set it up.” That was 1969. I think it was May. The opening was set for 1 July. At the very same time, 1 July, the opening was to be for the International—Kirk Kerkorian’s, which is now the Hilton. They needed so many dealers, and we needed so many dealers. I had to go through application after application. We hired 86 dealers.

I stayed there. I wrote letters to people that used to come to the Desert Inn and to the Frontier that knew me to come to the Landmark, to the 1 July opening. Few people came. A lot of them told me, “Mort, this is not my cup of tea.” I appreciated and I realized what they were saying.

Well, what were they saying? What’s the difference?

What they were saying was that it wasn’t the type of operation as the Desert Inn that they were accustomed to.

How did it differ?

It differed to the point where the atmosphere at the Desert Inn was by far just like comparing, right now, this beautiful Frontier, the friendly Frontier, with a downtown offbeat joint. It wasn’t the type of people. So, I phoned Mr. Maheu, and I said, “Mr. Maheu, at the price you’re paying me over here, you could get somebody for less. I can’t do you any good here.”

He says, “Well, Mort, you’ve been a gentleman all the way through. Cecil Simmons at the Desert Inn wants you bad. He wants you back.” But Harry Goodhart, at that time, was the casino manager of the Frontier. He says, “Harry Goodhart worked with you for a while at the Desert Inn. He would like very much to have you.

I says, “Mr. Maheu, if it’s all right with you, with the company, and with Harry Goodhart, this is where I started— the Last Frontier. If it’s all right with you, I’d like to go back, and if it will be God’s wish, I want to end it there. Finish!”

He said, “You go ahead.” I went. He says, “Call Harry.”

I called Marty. He says, “Come on down.” I came down. The same day he put me to work right on the floor. I stayed on the floor for about a year. People used to come in; I used to be very friendly to people. The prerequisite in this game is keep the game going, but do not be abrupt at people. Try to be as friendly as you can. well, people recognize that in somebody that’s serving them; we serve the public. I always had a full table going. And when I got off for my 15 or 20 minute breaks, a lot of people used to stop me and talk with me and say, “If I want to come up here next time, can I call you for a reservation?” And that was my pleasure. I got the cards from those people, their names, their telephone numbers; and when they called me, I knew exactly who they were and what their status was, what their credits were—I

made reservations for them, and they liked that.

Pretty soon the management realized that I shouldn't be behind there; I should be mingling with the people. So they say, "Well, we have to take you out of the pit. You can go in there anytime you want to, but we want you to be a host. When those people come in, buy them a drink. If you want to sit down and talk with them, invite them for dinner or invite them to the show. If you so see fit that they're nice people and potential customers...." They gave me a free hand in anything I wanted to do. I never abused it; I did everything that I thought was right. The management seemed to appreciate that, and that's how I became the first host made at the Frontier Hotel.

And that was about what year?

That was in 1973 or 1974.

Were the other hotels employing hosts at that time?

Most of them had a host, yes.

Do you have any idea when this whole concept of a host first surfaced in Las Vegas?

I think when they saw people like myself. The Flamingo had a host by the name of Abe Schiller. He was a very, very fine man. They called him Mr. Las Vegas.

Then after myself, they saw that I was doing pretty good. During the month I had enough people coming, I used to rent out 50, 60, 70 rooms—get reservations. I earned every month possibly my year's salary from the people that came in as much as they have played. You know, there isn't always profit; they can win. The fact is that they came through me.

And you would get a percentage of it, then?

I do not get no percentage, no.

You work on a flat salary?

Flat salary. The fact is that they come through me. And then they would spend their money. Whether they win or lose, that don't make any difference, but the fact is we do business with them.

Yes.

So now we have 6 hosts, and we're all doing good. Do you know why? Because the Frontier is the friendliest hotel on the Strip, bar none. We're not too large; we're not the largest; we're not either the smallest. We have about 590 some odd rooms. But when a guest comes in, from the day he comes in to the day he leaves, he is known in the hotel; we cater to him. He is not a lost number, like in the big hotels. You come in, and they don't even know you exist, unless you are a big, big roller.

Now, no business can depend strictly on the big rollers, and I'll tell you why: the big rollers...they are essential; they are very good for the business, but today they have the money; tomorrow they can hurt you. If they win and they win big, they go home with their money. But sometimes if you extend their credit beyond their limit—sometimes when they get beyond themselves—you might never collect their money.

How do you go about collecting on debts?

Well, it's a law that you can only extend them so much. Most of the people.. .what I'm trying to bring out.. .do not depend strictly on the big rollers. Treat everybody alike. The \$2 bettor should be as important to you as the

\$100 better because the \$2 better will never hurt you; he can only sit there and just lose \$20, \$50, \$100. He is a contributor to the hotel. His food.. .he doesn't get it free; the room.. .he doesn't get it free like the others. He is, actually, the lifeblood of the hotel.

Was the situation the same when you started in the business in the 1940s?

It wasn't very much the same, but I think I had a little to do with it. The Frontier is that way; I don't know about the others. I've never worked in any others. I don't know their policies. But at the Frontier we deal with the individuals. We treat them as they should be treated.

Now, what's been the major change in the management of the Frontier from the time that you were first associated with it, when it was the Last Frontier, to the present, under the new ownership?

Well, when we first started, we had one general manager and a casino manager, a few box men and a pit boss. Now there is a manager, a president.. .that's the president of the hotel. We have a very fine young fellow by the name of John Miner. He's a born Las Vegas, educated in Las Vegas. He even went to high school with my daughter, if you please. He's a local boy, and a very fine young man, highly respected. He is the manager; he is the president of the Frontier. We have a fellow by the name of Jerry Anderson as vice-president and assistant— well, well versed in the business. They're not only pencil men; they're gentlemen. They're human beings. They treat not just the customers but the employees like human beings. Not like in the olden day you don't like this, just kick them out. The employees are respected by men of

such caliber as John Miner, Mr. Anderson. We had a few other lesser [administrators], like Richard Schultz and Ed Zike. And then the hotel manager is Kurt Thompson.

I gather from what you're telling me, though, that the difference is primarily one of scale. You've mentioned that now there are many more people working there.

That is correct. Where it used to be in the hotel 3 men, there's about a dozen in capacities which are strictly connected with the management.

When I first started [in the Las Vegas gambling industry] I didn't think much of it. I thought I'll be here a year or 2. But as I grew into it, I realized that I was going to make my living here, and my children were born here, and my grandchildren are born here. I have never been happier, and I have never known anything better in my entire life. And I have lived awhile; I hope to live some more because I am in pretty good health—thank God for that. Coming 22 July I will be 82 years old. And I'm still working as much as any of the younger ones. As a matter of fact, some of them can't even keep up with me. They wonder how I do it. It is because of the love of the work that I do and the people that I work for and whom I work with that gives me the vitality, the willingness and the will to work. I come down in the morning at 10:00; I leave around 2:00, come back at 6:00, leave around 10:00, 11:00. If it is necessary, I stay longer, if I have people that it requires my being there. I'm supposed to be off on Sunday and Monday, and if we have anything doing of a holiday, I do not care. I'm there Sunday and Monday.

I am grateful to be having an understanding, beautiful, loyal wife. She is with me 100 percent. Reba—that's my wife's first name.

And she doesn't care; she has her own company. She enjoys the sports. She enjoys the shows. She says, "Honey, you go ahead and do it; that's your business. Everything is OK here." She knows that at night I come home, and we have a very happy union that way. And it's because of the atmosphere, the people that come into the Frontier Hotel that I love, and they admire me. It's just an unusual feeling, especially the people that I'm working for and with.

*It is the practice of the Oral History Program to verify the spelling of proper nouns whenever possible, either through research or with the assistance of the chronicler. In the case of the Saiger transcript such verification was occasionally impossible. Phonetic representation has been employed when the actual spelling could not be determined, and these words have been marked by an asterisk throughout the text.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Isaac and Celia Saiger, 1938.

Photograph courtesy of
Morton Saiger



Luciano Pavarotti with Mort Saiger.

Photograph courtesy of the
Frontier Hotel and Casino



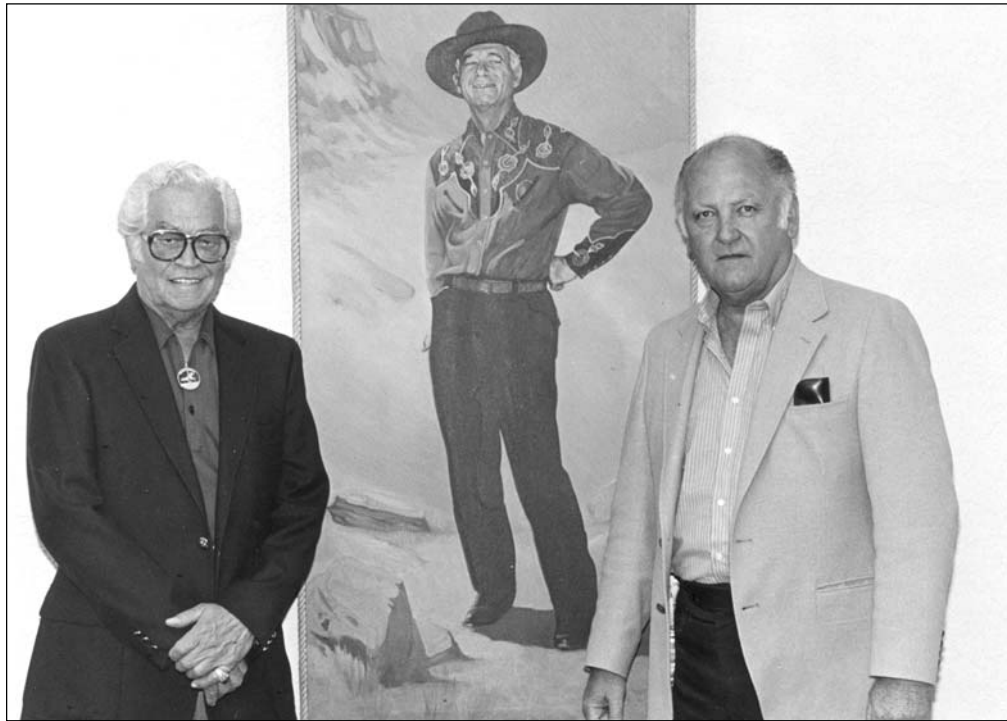
Pony express rider, Mort Saiger, carrying the mail from the Last Frontier.

Photograph courtesy of the Frontier Hotel and Casino



Mort, Reba, Gordon and Deborah Saiger at the Last Frontier, 1952.

Photograph courtesy of Special Collections,
University of Nevada Las Vegas Library



Mort Saiger (l) and Tex Griffith (r) with a portrait of Tex's father, R.E. Griffith.

Photograph courtesy of Las Vegas News Bureau

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